Ishtiaq, F., A.R. Rahmani, S. Javed & M.C. Coulter (2004): Nest-site characteristics of Black-necked Stork (*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*) and White-necked Stork (*Ciconia episcopus*) in Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur, India. *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc. 101(1)*: 90-95.

Korol, J.J. & R.L. Hutto (1984): Factor affecting nest site location in Glia Woodpeckers. *Condor 86*: 73-78.

Mathew, D.N. (1972): The ecology of the baya in Rajampet, Cuddapah district, Andhra Pradesh. *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc. 69(1)*: 188-191.

Sharma, S.K. (1991): Plant life and weaver birds (with special reference to eastern Rajasthan). Ph.D. Thesis. University of Rajasthan, Rajasthan.

2. NILGIRI PIPIT *ANTHUS NILGHIRIENSIS* FEEDING IN FLOWING WATER

Harkirat Singh Sangha[1]

[1]B-27, Gautam Marg, Hanuman Nagar, Jaipur 302 021, Rajasthan, India. Email: harkirat.sangha@gmail.com

Nilgiri Pipit *Anthus nilghiriensis* is endemic to grasslands in the Western Ghats mountain range in south-western India (Alström and Mild 2003).

All members of the Motacillidae family feed largely on small invertebrates. The wide, but long, and pointed bill of the pipits is perfectly adapted for picking prey from soft sand, among rocks and pebbles, and in short vegetation. A huge array of invertebrates is eaten by pipits. Insects predominate its diet, but a wide variety of other arthropods ranging from spiders, and other arachnids, to myriapods, worms, small terrestrial, freshwater or marine molluscs, and crustaceans are also consumed. Seeds and other vegetable material are eaten by many species of pipits (Simms 1992), but they form a small part of the diet. For many motacillids, there is still rather little information available on the diet other than the fact that small insects and other invertebrates are eaten (Tyler 2004).

Pipits and wagtails are chiefly insect-eaters, flies especially adult Diptera are preferred. Beetles, grasshoppers and other ground-living insects, may also appear in pipit diets.

While watching birds near Rajmalai shola, Eravikulam National Park, Kerala, on June 01, 2010, I noticed a Nilgiri Pipit feeding in a shallow flow of water over a sprawling granite rock. The clear water trickling down from the shola was barely 1-3 cm deep except for some scattered puddles. The bird was actively catching insects from the surface of the water. At times I observed it catching insects from deep puddles by immersing its whole head into water. I observed the pipit's activity from 09:30 to 10:15 hrs without a break. A large number of the catch was mostly picked from the surface of the water. Obviously, it was capitalizing on abundant supply of prey in the flowing water.

While most wagtails, and those pipits with long claws that favour wetland habitats, are known to wade in shallow water to pick aquatic invertebrates, the Nilgiri Pipit "forages on ground, in short grass" (Tyler 2004).

Regarding its food and feeding habits, Ali and Ripley (1998) mention "insects and small seeds" as its food but do not describe foraging habits. Nevertheless, like most motacillids it appears to be catholic in its choice of insects and also opportunistic.

REFERENCES

Ali, S. & S.D. Ripley (1998): Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan. Second edition. Vol. 9. Robins to Wagtails. Oxford University Press, Delhi. Pp. 271-273.

Alström, P. & K. Mild (2003): Pipits and Wagtails of Europe, Asia and North America. Identification and Systematics. Christopher Helm, London. Pp. 258-261.

Simms, E. (1992): British Larks, Pipits and Wagtails. Harper Collins, London. Pp. 102-119.

Tyler, S.J. (2004): Pipits and Wagtails. Pp. 710-723. *In*: del Hoyo, J., A. Elliot & D.A. Christie (Eds): Handbook of the Birds of the World. Vol. 9. Cotingas to Pipits and Wagtails. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona.

3. DISCOVERY OF A LARGE HERONRY AT CHHATA, NEAR MATHURA, IN WESTERN UTTAR PRADESH

Rajneesh Dwevedi[1,2] and Abdul Jamil Urfi[1,3]

[1]Department of Environmental Studies, University of Delhi, New Delhi 110 007, India.
[2]Email: rajneesh.conservation@gmail.com
[3]Email: ajurfi@rediffmail.com

The Delhi region has several heronries (Urfi 1993) of which the most well-known are the ones located inside the premises of the Delhi Zoo (Urfi 1997) and Sultanpur National Park (Urfi *et al.* 2007). In antiquity, other heronries, now

Table 1: Different species of colonial waterbirds observed in Chhata heronry during October 2011

Species	Nests	Nestlings	Adults
Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala*	81	6	123
Oriental White Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus*	42	-	130
Asian Openbill *Anastomus oscitans*	4	12	-
Little Cormorant *Phalacrocorax niger*	8	-	11
Oriental Darter *Anhinga melanogaster*	2	4	6
Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*	3	4	2
Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia*	-	-	5
Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*	-	-	3
Indian Pond-Heron *Ardeola grayii*	-	-	4
Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*	-	-	11

extinct, are also recorded such as the one adjoining Mansi Ganga tank in Govardhan (Hume and Oates 1890) and at Faridabad (MacDonald 1962). In this note, we describe another large, hitherto unreported, heronry at a tank in Chhata, close to Mathura.

Chhata town (27° 43' 37" N; 77° 30' 30" E), in Mathura district, lies on National Highway 2, connecting Delhi to Mathura. On several occasions over the past few years, Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala* have been observed circling in the sky close to the town. But this year, on October 06, 2011, when we got off the main road and walked a short distance from the town, close to a medieval structure (some sort of fortress perched on an elevated spot) which is visible from the main road, we found a large heronry with several nesting species of birds. During our subsequent visits, besides making some general observations on the heronry and the tank, we also counted the nests, nestlings and adults of various species.

Located on the western bank of River Yamuna, Chhata town has a small pond, locally known as 'Surajkund', which was estimated to be *c.* 0.04 sq. km, using the imagery available on Google Earth (Google Earth Pro 2011). It has two islands, one larger, estimated to be *c.* 759.83 sq. m, with several Mesquite (*Prosopis juliflora*) trees (n > 20), and the other smaller, with ruins of abandoned structures, along with growth of Mesquite and *Phragmites* sp. Nests of different bird species seen in a heronry were spread all over the canopy of trees on the large island. Interestingly, some nests were so low that they were close to the water surface. On enquiring the locals revealed that the heronry had been around for several years, with some claiming that it was about a hundred years old.

Among the several birds (Table 1), the largest species at Chhata was the Painted Stork. A total of 81 nests of this species were recorded, of which five were in the canopy of Mesquite trees, growing on a smaller island. Of the 6 nestlings observed, three were estimated to be 10 days post hatching (DPH) and three were much older (about 45-60 DPH). The nestlings were aged on the basis of their body plumage and general morphology as described in Shah and Desai (1975). This confirms the general observation that egg laying in Painted Stork is asynchronous.

Chhata tank was observed to be heavily infested (*c.* 30% of the total water surface) with Water Hyacinth *Eichhornia crassipes*. In fact, the hyacinth mats were so dense that patches of open water were hardly visible. Though tests on water quality were not conducted, the water seemed polluted as the garbage from nearby settlements was being dumped there. While more studies by our group are being planned on this interesting heronry we recommend that this site should be included in the list of IBAs (Islam and Rahmani 2004), especially in light of the fact that at least three species of threatened birds (Table 1), Painted Stork, Oriental White Ibis and Oriental Darter (BirdLife International 2011), nest here.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors thank the University of Delhi for funds: Rajneesh D. for the award of Junior Research Fellowship and AJU for the award of a grant under the scheme to 'Strengthen R & D Doctoral Research Programme by providing funds to university faculty'.

REFERENCES

BirdLife International (2011): IUCN Red List for birds. Downloaded from http://www.birdlife.org on 18/10/2011.

Google Earth Pro (2011): Downloaded from http://www.google.com/earth/index.html on 18/10/2011.

Hume, A.O. & E.W. Oates (1890): The Nests and Eggs of Indian Birds. Volume III. Taylor & Francis, London.

Islam, M.Z. & A.R. Rahmani (2004): Important Bird Areas in India: Priority Sites for Conservation. Bombay Natural History Society, BirdLife International and Oxford University Press.

MacDonald, M. (1962): Birds in the Sun: Some Beautiful Birds of India. D.B. Taraporevala Sons & Co. Pvt. Ltd, London.

Shah, R.V. & J.H. Desai (1975): Growth and development of Painted Stork *Ibis leucocephalus* Pennant. II. Post hatching growth pattern and motor development. *Pavo 13*: 88-101.

Urfi, A.J. (1993): Heronries in the Delhi region of India. *Oriental Bird Club Bull. 17*: 19-21.

Urfi, A.J. (1997): The significance of Delhi Zoo for wild waterbirds, with special reference to the Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala*. *Forktail 12*: 87-97.

Urfi, A.J., T. Meghanathan & A. Kalam (2007): Nesting ecology of the Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala* at Sultanpur National Park, Haryana, India. *Forktail 23*: 150-153.